

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08435 01 OF 02 041626Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /058 W

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R 041608Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1654

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: EC REFERENDUM: THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

SUMMARY: DURING THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN, THE MEDIA HAVE LITERALLY SATURATED THE ELECTORATE WITH APPEALS AND ARGUMENTS FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY. THE LEVEL OF DISCOURSE HAS BEEN REMARKABLY HIGH AND SOME OF THE EXCHANGES DRAMATIC INDEED. TOMORROW THE PEOPLE WILL DECIDE. LIKE THE PRIME MINISTER, THEY ARE LIKELY TO VOTE YES, NOT OUT OF ANY HIGH-MINDED SENSE OF IDEALISM OR GREAT FAITH IN THE FUTURE OF EUROPE, BUT RATHER OUT OF A PRAGMATIC CONVICTION THAT ON BALANCE
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PAGE 02 LONDON 08435 01 OF 02 041626Z

BRITAIN WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO COPE WITH ITS PROBLEMS IF

IT REMAINS IN THE EC. END SUMMARY.

1. THE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN IS NOW ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON. WITH LESS THAN 24 HOURS REMAINING UNTIL THE POLLING BOOTHS OPEN, ANY LAST-MINUTE SHIFT IN PUBLIC VOTING INTENTIONS WILL NOT BE REVEALED UNTIL THE ACTUAL RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED ON FRIDAY. THE LATEST OPINION SURVEYS CONTINUE TO GIVE THE ORO-MARKETEERS A TWO TO ONE LEAD, AND OUR SOURCES AMONG THE POLLSTERS INSIST THAT THEIR FORECASTS ARE BASED ON IN-DEPTH STUDIES AND SHOULD PROVE HIGHLY ACCURATE.

2. NONETHELESS SEVERAL QUESTION MARKS LOOM OVER THE FIGURES. THIS IS A REFERENDUM AND NOT A GENERAL ELECTION, AND THERE IS NO WAY OF KNOWING HOW MANY PEOPLE LIKELY TO GET OUT AND ACTUALLY VOTE. THE EVIDENCE IS CONTRADICTORY AS TO WHICH SIDE WOULD SUFFER MOST FROM LARGE-SCALE ABSENTIONS. FURTHERMORE, FOR ALL THE VOTERS WHO HAVE LONG SINCE MADE UP THEIR MINDS ON THIS ISSUE, THERE ARE MANY MORE WHO REMAIN CONFUSED AND UNCERTAIN.

3. IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN, TV STATIONS ARE LITERALLY SATURATING THE ELECTORATE WITH PROGRAMS DEVOTED TO THE ISSUE OF EC MEMBERSHIP. DEBATES, SPEECHES, PANELS, PAID POLITICAL BROADCASTS, NEWSCASTS, AND EDUCATIVE PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN JAMMING THE SCREEN EVER SINCE SUNDAY EVENING, LEAVING THE AVERAGE VIEWER HARD-PRESSED TO FIT IN 45 MINUTES OF KOJAK. WITH THE NOTABLE EXCEPTION OF DENIS HEALEY, VIRTUALLY EVERY MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY HAS PITCHED IN DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THE DEBATES IN PARTICULAR (BENN VS. JENKINS; HEATH/JENKINS/STEEL VS. POWELL/ShORE/HART; HEATH/THORPE VS. SHORE/CASTLE) HAVE PRODUCED SOME HIGH DRAMA INDEED.

4. AT THE END OF THE DAY, HOWEVER, ONE IS STILL LEFT WONDERING HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE IT ALL HAS MADE. THE ARGUMENTS OVER JOBS, INVESTMENT, TRADE, AND NET ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE ESSENTIALLY CANCEL ONE ANOTHER OUT AND ARE BEYOND THE COMPREHENSION OF MOST ORDINARY PEOPLE ANYWAY. IF THOSE WHO ARE STILL UNDECIDED TAKE THE TROUBLE TO VOTE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 08435 01 OF 02 041626Z

TOMORROW, THEY WILL HAVE TO BALANCE OFF SOME INTANGIBLE AND VERY EMOTIVE PROPOSITIONS.

5. THE PRO-MARKETEERS, ESPECIALLY TED HEATH AND ROY JENKINS, HAVE PUT TO PEOPLE THE CHALLENGE OF PLAYING A CONSTRUCTIVE AND EXCITING ROLE IN A LARGER POLITICAL CONTEXT. THEY HAVE OCCASIONALLY STOOPED TO SCARE TACTICS, CONJURING UP NIGHTMARES OF AN IMPOVERISHED AND FRIENDLESS

BRITAIN UNABLE TO SURVIVE ON ITS OWN, BUT FOR THE MOST
PART THEIRS IS AN APPEAL TO A VISION OF INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION AND FAITH IN THE FUTURE.

6. THE ANTI-MARKETEERS CALL FOR FAITH TOO, BUT FOR
FAITH IN BRITAIN'S ABILITY TO GO IT ALONE. ENOCH POWELL,
EVOKING IN MEASURED CADENCES MEMORIES OF PAST GREATNESS,
WARNS THAT A YES VOTE WILL FORECLOSE FOREVER THE CHANCES
FOR A REBIRTH OF NATIONAL PURPOSE. TONY BENN, ARDENTLY

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08435 02 OF 02 041623Z

43

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /058 W

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R 041608Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1655

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AND EARNESTLY ESPOUSING THE RIGHT OF ORDINARY PEOPLE TO CONTROL THEIR OWN LIVES, WARNS AGAINST SURRENDERING SOVEREIGNTY TO THE BUREAUCRATS OF BRUSSELS. HE EXPRESSES COMPLETE CONFIDENCE THAT THE POLLS ARE WRONG AND THAT THE PEOPLE, IN ALL THEIR MAJESTY, WILL REJECT THE ADVICE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AND VOTE TO COME OUT OF THE EC.

7. THE PRIME MINISTER PROFESSES TO BE ABOVE THE FRAY. PUFFING ON HIS PIPE AND PATRONIZING THE DOGMATIC PROTAGONISTS ON BOTH SIDES ("IT'S GOOD FOR THEM TO LET OFF STEAM"), HE SAYS THAT HE AND JIM CALLAGHAN HAVE WEIGHED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 08435 02 OF 02 041623Z

ALL THE EVIDENCE AND COME TO THE PRAGMATIC CONCLUSION THAT BRITAIN WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO TACKLE THE PROBLEMS IT FACES IF IT REMAINS IN THE EC. EXCEPT TO THOSE PASSIONATELY COMMITTED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, HE HAS PROBABLY HIT JUST THE RIGHT NOTE.

8. IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO BE STRUCK BY THE ENORMITY OF THE DECISION THE VOTERS ARE BEING ASKED TO MAKE AND THE WIDESOREAD UNCERTAINTY SO MANY OF THEM FEEL. THIS IS COMPOUNDED BY THE INVOLUNTARY TENSION ONE EXPERIENCES BEFORE A ROCKET COMES BACK TO THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE MOON. WITH IT ALL, WE ARE STILL INCLINED TO TRUST THE POLLSTERS AND OUR OWN SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENTS AND BELIEVE THAT THE BRITISH PEOPLE WILL VOTE TOMORROW TO REMAIN IN THE EC. THE RESULTS SHOULD BE KNOWN BY FRIDAY EVENING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEMBERSHIP, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, SPECIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON08435
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750195-0487
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750682/aaaacxch.tel
Line Count: 203
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <14 OCT 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EC REFERENDUM: THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON SUMMARY: DURING THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN, THE MEDIA
TAGS: PINT, UK, EEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006